

"THE MONTGOMERY STREET GANG"  
(The Story Behind the Story)

A number of years ago, I wrote a Christmas Bible lesson entitled, "The Montgomery Street Gang." I asked a friend if he would do some visuals to go along with the lesson. He agreed. For several Christmases, the lesson was taught with visuals and we added some beautiful Betty Lukens flannelgraph for the Christmas and Easter part of the lesson. Kids loved it. Several said, "You should write a book." We just continued to use it as a Christmas lesson.

Covid hit. A lot of my work was at a standstill in the spring. What to do! A thought about the Montgomery Street Gang. Hmmm, several said what about a book.... you will need to develop the plot, the characters, the message. Hmmm, again. No, I don't think so. I really didn't want to write a book. I am not an author. But, I still kept thinking about it. I was praying about it and as I prayed, I felt the Lord nudging me to write....

So, one weekend, I sat down and taking the skeleton of the lesson, I started to jot down and develop the characters in the lesson, adding a few more; developing the plot and message knowing that I wanted to include a very clear presentation of the Christmas (and Easter) story along with a strong salvation message. I couldn't believe it. Thoughts were coming so fast... I was writing down things as quickly as I could. The book.... "The Montgomery Street Gang" was written in a few days! (Now, that goes against everything writer-friends told me would happen!) But, I felt the Lord saying, "I gave you the words, the book is complete!"

More to the story.... I needed an illustrator. The friend (Jim Chrisfield) who did the visuals years ago for me, I just knew he was the one the Lord wanted me to ask. Where is Jim? Lost track of him. Found him. Called him, told him about the 'lesson turned book.' Ah, he remembered the lesson. I said, "Jim, I want you to illustrate the book." He said, "No." Bless his heart, he said, "I just retired (as a social studies teacher). He said, "I haven't done any sketching in a long time. I just can't do it. Sorry, Emily."

I told Jim, "I didn't want to write the book. But God moved me to write it." I said, "Jim, I will send you the 'book version,' just read it." He agreed. He e-mailed me and said, "Emily, I love the book..... I just picked up my sketch book! I'm a little rusty, but if you are sure you want me, and you are patient, I will give it a try. Pray for me." (Jim is a wonderful man – loves the Lord; a very humble man.)

So, that's our story. I didn't want to write the book, BUT GOD. Jim didn't want to illustrate it, BUT GOD! We both feel God gave us this book not for any honor for us, but that the children would read this little chapter book and be blest and that God would be glorified. Jim and I agreed at the beginning that we wanted no royalties... we were doing this for the Lord and that any royalties would go to Child Evangelism Fellowship's SPAN program (supporting CEF Nationals working in third world countries).

May God do what He wishes with this little book for His honor and glory!